Arnold Toynbee, a British historian, writes that all culture grows and breaks down and decay. Culture is responsive to challenges and become sterile. In the process of change, those culture that can cope with a changing environment can survive but those cannot they break down. Whether one can accept Toynbee’s view on change of human culture or not this observation has a great relevance to the contemporary Naga situation.

The Naga society, so also the Lotha, is undergoing a rapid change in their cultural set up. In response to such situation they are adapting to a new way of life and in certain cases disregarding their old way of life. A new set of values are thus emerging in their society in which the old is disappearing, making a room for a new ones. Such changes taking place in the cultural set up of the Lothas are noticeable in their attitudes of life, family life, social life, customs and traditions, religious beliefs and practices, food patterns and dresses.

In the nineteenth century a significant landmark has taken place in the history of the Lotha people. It witnessed a change from traditional to modernity. Prior the arrival of the Britishers the Lothas lived relatively in isolative lives in their own respective villages. There was no scope of mixing up with other groups of people. During that time the British made their first entry into the Naga Hills in 1832, but to the Lothas the first contact was made only in the year 1841.
The entry of the British administration brought along the Christian missionaries. The British intervened with the indigenous political institutions and later they also introduced changes in the subsistence activities of the people. The Christian missionaries who came at the same time as the British colonizers, brought changes in the indigenous religious beliefs and practices and many aspects of life such as Christianity and education.

The impact of westernization and modernization on the life of the Lotha people has a tremendous affect which, in the long run, led to the gradual decline of traditional system of village administration, religious beliefs and practices, customs and traditions. Such transformation in the way of life of the people was due to the introduction of alien cultural elements into the Lotha’s traditional way of life. Thus changes have occurred as a result of a new experience initially due to the contact with the western civilization and adaptation of a new religion and various relating aspects of style of life and more so after 1947 with improved communication, transportation, development opportunities and contact with people from other cultural groups.

The Christian missionaries not only changed the faith of the people but also brought along with them an important factor of modernization and that is education. The missionaries goaded the people to give up their tribal practices and encouraged them to take modern education and other modern practices. Education is not an independent variable. It is interlinked with economic factors. Therefore, if people have only subsistence economy then they cannot make much use of schools and
teachers etc., though it is quite possible that if people are educated then economic development may be accelerated and may readily accept an innovation.

More rapid changes taken place during the post-independence period. From 1947 onwards the Government of India launched a series of developmental programmes in the country and as a result of which hardly any aspect of life of the people that remained untouched. This bring us the need of proper understanding of socio-cultural organization as well as the nature of change that have been taken place within the Lotha society.

So far we have been saying that changes begin to take place ever since they had come into contact with the British and missionaries in the later part of nineteenth century. They had moved towards greater change at the later stage during the post-independence period. The Lothas, though not highly develop, have attained certain degree of modernity and pressing towards greater change in various aspects of life.

In this study the ethnographic materials of the previous work done by the British administrators and the missionaries are considered useful and carefully examined in the discussion of the Lotha traditional culture.

In the light of such discussion an attempt has been made, as far as possible, to present the traditional culture of the Lotha society and the new ones which have been incorporated into it. Further, an attempt has been also made to trace out their persistence of change of culture through the ages in the process of acculturation.
Thus, by studying the traditional way of life of the people we may be able to understand the dominant value of a society and the way in which changes have taken place in those dominant values and the modification or replacement by some other values. Keeping all these in view the Lotha traditional culture and the existing state of affairs are discussed.

In this final chapter an attempt was made to summarize the main factors responsible for the culture change and the existing state of affairs.

Now, with the spread of education, economic development, a new horizons and a new outlook in life, the standard of living of Wokha people have been remarkably improved. People have changed their life style by giving away their old habits and customs in pursuit of new things of modern affluence. Many people have changed their occupations. The Lothas, in general, are cultivators but there are some people who do carpentry, contract works, basketry, blacksmithy etc., besides cultivation. Consequently majority are now depending on a combination of more than one source of income. The pattern is that during agricultural seasons people engaged themselves in agricultural activities, but during agricultural off season many of them engaged themselves in other occupations. Their main interest is to earn some more cash which also clearly indicates that the economy has drastically changed from barter to cash.

In agricultural field a number of developmental projects such as distribution of fertilizer, scientific chemical remedies and demonstration
of using improved seeds have been adopted in the district. Improved tools and implements are being sold to the farmers on 50% subsidized rate and many farmers have been benefited by making use of such opportunities. Improved tools like iron agricultural implements are also being used in the villages now.

Prior to the introduction of agricultural development in the district Wokha economy was predominantly subsistence economy: household produced only for their own consumption. However, people are now tend to grow more of cash crop and the result of such cultivation of cash crops have brought Lotha’s economy to market. The price of land have been steady during the last few decades but now with the introduction of agricultural and other developmental programmes in the district the price of land has also began to rise rapidly.

Unfortunately, the people of Wokha district have not yet turned their attention towards the scientific method of animal husbandry, most probably because there are other more lucrative economic fields of attention such as contract works and supply works, besides the agricultural activities. However, though not scientifically done, almost every household have got all kinds domesticated animals for both home consumption and for commercial purposes as well.

With the enlargement of various opportunities in different vocations a remarkable change in daily wages have taken place in the district. The institution of exchange of labour has virtually disappeared. Now any kind of work is paid in cash only. The present average of wages paid for any kind of work in the district ranges from Rs. 80/- to Rs. 100/-
for men and Rs. 70/- to Rs. 80/- for women but for skilled labourers it ranges from Rs. 150/- to Rs. 200/- per day. The increase of daily wages is a clear indication of economic development in various occupations but on the other hand it has also led to the breaking down of age-old traditional practices of paying wages on reciprocal exchange of labour based on kinship obligations.

Generally, the standard of living of the people refer to the economic condition, mode of dwellings, diet and dresses etc., of the people. Owing to the spread of modern education, developmental programmes in various fields and increased of income facilitated the people to improve their standard of living significantly. Their way of life has been affected and their way of traditional dresses have changed into western dresses to a great extent. Now wearing of modern dresses has become more common in the district. Traditional beds and wooden seats have been replaced by modern furniture. Even the age-old earthen pots have been substituted by steel and aluminium utensils. Now people live in tin-roofed houses. Many have owned radio, tape recorder, bicycle etc. This shows that the economic status of the people have gone up and the process of acculturation has been at work among the Lotha people.

Among the Lothas social institution like marriage is considered as one of the most important for the continuity of human society. Generally, the Lothas followed monogamy but there is no restriction for polygamy. As a result some rich men occasionally have more than one wife. Polyandry is not practiced in this area. At present, however, polygamy is strictly prohibited among the Lothas by the Christian ethics and
accordingly no husband is permitted to marry second time unless the first
marriage has been dissolved by death or divorce according to legal
procedure, approved by the Christian principle.

In the past, age at marriage for boys was between 17 to 22 years
and girls between 14 to 18 years, but now it has been raised to 21 to 25
for girls and 26 to 30 years for boys. With the introduction of formal
education there is no fixed age group for marriage in Lotha society today.
Some got married at the early age and some later.

Traditionally, among the Lotha society, negotiation and decision
making for marriage was done either by the parents or relatives. But such
procedure is hardly followed by the younger generations as most
marriages are taking place without the concern of the parents but it is
arranged by the boys and girls themselves. In most cases negotiation and
making of decision for marriage is left to the individual concern. This
shows that the commonly accepted type of marriage among the present
younger generation of the Lotha community is more of love marriage
rather than parental arranged marriage.

In the past days, economic status of the family for marriage was a
minor point to be taken into account but now it is the most important
point to be considered, for most of the parents, particularly the girl’s
parents, try to seek for a marriage with a boy whose economic status is
higher. Therefore, a man who did not possessed such status may be
considered as unmatched for the girl. Such situation contributed to the
increasing number of eloping cases in present days.
Generally, expenditure at marriage was small and manageable in the past days. It was only the closest relatives who were fed on such occasion – a pig and a fowl was just enough. Distribution of bride’s meat, which was about 16 kgs of meat, was done among the closest relatives of the family only. Nowadays, the bride’s meat is distributed among all the clansmen and friends in the village. It is observed that theoretically people still maintain the traditional system of distribution of bride’s meat but practically they no longer follow it. The rapid increase of expenditure at marriage, due to the introduction of economic development and job opportunities in the district, indicates that the emphasis on economic factors in marriage have been increased while significance of rituals in marriage appears to have gone down.

Prior to the advent of Christianity the traditional system of marriage rituals and formalities were strictly observed. With the coming of Christianity giving of bride price to the girl’s family became a decadence among the Lothas. Now bride price and presentation or dowry have no place in Lotha’s marriage. Christian marriage systems are different. Today Church officials are invited to administer the engagement and marriage ceremonies. Wedding is held in the church or elsewhere. Christian marriage have no specific time to perform marriage ceremony. One can perform marriage at any season according to the conveniences of both the parties.

Christianity has a great impact on the traditional marriage system. With the coming of Christianity the traditional rituals and formalities at marriage have disappeared. But no matter how much it has affected the
form of marriage, still the inner core of the Lotha customary system of marriage remained unchanged. The present practice of negotiation and marriage arrangement, divination conducted on slaughtered animals and system of giving and distribution of bride meat are some of the elements and modified forms of traditional system of marriage.

In the pre-Christian era the dormitory (Chumpho) system played an important role among the Lotha society. But with the coming of Christianity along with modern system of education the importance of this age-old system has become non-existence. Now it is nowhere to be found in any of the Lotha villages except in some villages where it is built on certain occasion for memory's sake only. Nowadays, Christian organizations like Church, schools, clubs and students' organizations etc., have substituted the traditional dormitory system and have become the centre for the activities of youths and some play as much parallel educational role in the village life. The colonial administrations and missionary's educational system not only revolutionized the culture ethos of the Lothas but also led them to a new dimension of value system of life. Such development of broader and healthier outlook of the people enabled them to accept the new trends of change in their society. The standard of living of the people have also changed notably as a result of the effect of modern educational system. These days, mass education has provided a cultural revival among the younger generation.

The old-age traditional dresses and ornaments have all changed to modern ones. With the influence of the western cultural elements indigenous dresses have been replaced and supplemented by modern dresses like pants, shirts, blouses, coats, shoes etc. The use of such items
of modern dresses have become increasingly popular and fashionable not only in towns but also in villages. Traditional shawls which imply rank and status have also lost its significance. Yet traditional dress is still loved by some section of the people. Traditional ornaments such as earrings, wristlets, armlets, bracelets, necklaces, and dancing dresses have been changed to modern type of ornaments such as brass necklaces, finger rings, ear rings and watches. Hence, there is now hardly anybody using such type of traditional ornaments except those few people who are in the villages. For town dwellers such things have become a mere show-piece in their setting rooms.

House building materials and designs have changed but some old type of houses are still existing in the villages. With the advent of modern civilization and techniques the economic condition of the people has been raised and their housing patterns have also widely changed, specially the villages near the towns. Most of the houses are now roofed with tin or plain sheets and the way of construction of the building is modern. Even in the villages many buildings are now found constructed in modern ways with modern amenities such as sanitary arrangement, electric fittings and other modern appliances.

In place of traditional mortar and pestle there is rice mill in the village. The age-old pounding table or mortar and pestle have ceased to perform its function these days. Liquor vat is no more used by the villagers for they no longer drink liquor or rice beer (soko) instead things like cans and barrels are used. Bamboo shelves in which all the kitchen articles are kept, are no longer hung in the kitchen. Some well-to-do
people use modern cupboard in the kitchen. A folded plantain leaves which were used as cups have been replaced by modern porcelain cups and glass tumblers. Things like Naga made earthen pot (Chonpfî) and shallow wooden desh (Tsstîngphi or Phi-Kyu) have all been substituted by aluminium and steel utensils. Besides kitchen articles many more modern consumer goods such as radios, tape recorders, televisions, bicycles and furniture are used by the people. Foreign goods such as tailored clothes, sewing machines, lamps and other minor gadgets of western civilization gradually became household necessities for some of the Lothas.

Traditional food items contained rice, vegetable, bamboo shoots and juice, dry fishes and occasionally meat. Now people takes more of additional food and drinks like meat, fish, dal, tea, snacks and breads and tea. The food patterns of those people who are in higher economic group shows that they consume those quality food like fried food, fruits, milk and tea, snacks and bread. Some people consume tea and bread at lunch time instead of rice. As far as the method of cooking and meal timings are concerned, there has not been much changes taken place as majority of the people are still practicing boiled and smoked food for both morning and evening. Such situations taking place among the Lothas are clear indication of changes that have been taken place in their food patterns as a result of the introduction of modernization and economic development in the district.

The condition that was prevailing among the Lothas, at the time of arrival of the Gospel to them, was under neurotic fear created by a belief
in harmful spirits. The religious systems of the Lothas in which they had reached the point of change from their constant fear of evil spirits, made them embrace Christianity as a refuge. Their old beliefs and practices were replaced by a new doctrine of Christian faith. The converts no longer observe the ritual associated with so called ‘heathen worship’. With a gradual and progressive acceptance of Christianity, the shift of culture loyalty from animism to Christianity began changing the outlook and living culture of the people. It was a drastic change from animism to Christianity. As a result of such change, the abandoned animistic practices were all replaced with new practices acceptable to the Christian norms of life. The age-old dormitories have also lost its relevance among the Lotha society and been replaced by a new building of a separate Christian youth dormitories where songs of praises, prayer meetings and other spiritual values were encouraged. Now, people are so influenced by to the western culture that English songs and hymns are commonly used even in church services, youth gatherings and social occasions.

But no matter how much effort they have made to abstain from the practice of animistic culture, the Lothas have not been able to shake off their old superstitious beliefs. Yet in a sense, they have a double-tiered system of beliefs. Even the religious festivals are no longer observed as they have been replaced by the Christian festivals such as Easter, Christmas and New Year.

So far we have been saying about the factors like colonial administration, Christianity and also economic developmental projects in
the post independence of India as the main determining agents of culture change among the Lotha people.

These factors ushered in a tremendous change in the life of the people and caused the Lotha society to move towards modernization. Of course, complete secularization which is the ultimate stage of modernization is yet to come. However, an urban version of Lotha culture had already grown. Now many are living in an area where urban conditions such as modern facilities for technology and education are found. Therefore, one can assume and visualize that after having come across such changes for the last few decades the Lothas will be fast advancing towards modernization and freely assimilating themselves in national mainstream of politics, economic enterprises, cultural affluence and standard of living. But, at the same time, some of the material cultural aspects of the Lothas have been rapidly changing and replacing by the new ones for, in the process of acculturation, they are more easy to assimilate to the new ones. But it is also true that some aspects of culture traits may take another form of modified cultural pattern but retains the basic elements of the original culture traits which may remain unchanged. For example, the existing practice of distribution of bride-meat at marriage by the Christians is the modified form of the Lotha tradition system for marriage. Today, the Lotha society is struggling consciously or unconsciously for its survival by retaining the old as well as incorporating the new values. It can be also assumed that further more changes will take place and if changes are fully accepted, a time may come that some of the Lotha traditional practices and material culture as well, will be forgotten in the process of change. Therefore, the present
generation must tackle the problem carefully and see that one's cultural heritage should not be forgotten by the changing forces of the modern civilization. This is the urgent task confronting before the Lotha society.